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ABSTRACT

Seven papers are presented from the presession of the 1992 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) conference dealing with the status and reputation of the library and information professions, which continue to suffer a lack of image in society. Suggestions for improving the status of the library and information science professions are offered. The following papers are included: (1) "The Social and Professional Responsibilities of the Profession" (Pawan K. Gupta); (2) "Improving the Market Value of the Profession: Educational Requirements" (Christine O. Kisiedu); (3) "Image, Status and Reputation: Some Observations" (Russell Bowden); (4) "Management of Professional Associations: Guidelines" (David R. Bender); (5) "Statutory Recognition of Library and Information Profession" (A. O. Banjo); (6) "Improving the Market Value of the Profession: Increasing Recognition" (Elizabeth C. Reade Fong); and (7) "Perceptions of the Status of the Profession" (Maria Elena Zapata Z.) References follow most papers. (SLD)

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WORKSHOP THEME (IF APPLICABLE) The status, reputation and image of the library and information profession.

The social and professional responsibilities of the profession.

by

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ABSTRACT

The social and professional responsibilities of the profession.

Information has played a definite role in the society since ancient times. Despite this library and information science profession continue to suffer lack of image and status in the society. Highlighting the poor performance of public library sector, the paper suggests to lay a greater emphasis on quality library services and to improve access to information for all.

The LIS profession should analyse the information requirements of the society; the relationship between information, development of society and librarians; and in turn the changes required in the role of the librarian.

In order to improve the image and status of the profession, it should cause social awareness about the role of information in society, should redefine the professional and non-professional activities, should adapt LIS education programmes laying emphasis on consumers and the society, should be responsible for overcoming barriers in the free flow of information, and above all it should be relevant to the society.

THE SOCIAL & PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROFESSION

The concept of information service in and for the society is very old. Since ancient times the persons or groups with information have been powerful and respected. They enjoyed a better image and status in the society. Even the persons with access to information commanded respect in the society. And, the information more often was a closely guarded commodity. In the monarchy, as well as in other forms of government, persons were specially appointed to deal with information collection and organisation.

It was quite late that information dissemination media, as well as persons connected with it, diversified. The role of information collection, organisation, and dissemination came to be shared by a variety of persons authors, journalists, editors, etc. Later on librarians came to be associated with this work. The librarians with traditional skills initiated information services for the society under patronage of a variety of sources. Gradually with the spread of education, library became an important social institution. The L&IS profession came into being, with the development of its own theories and norms, the spread of L&IS education, and associations having taken lead to develop it as a profession.

Despite the progress in L&IS profession, libraries, specially the public libraries, are yet to become a moving force in the developing countries. For example, in India only one third of the states have enacted library legislation. In rest of the country only in a few states,

L&IS personnel individually or in small groups are making sporadic efforts towards library legislation. Although the library legislation does not exist in two-third of the country, but the libraries are there, e.g. in the state of Rajasthan there is a state central library, in each district there is a district library and many libraries and information centre at a lower level. The same is true of many other states lacking library legislation, but these are not effective.

The mere existence of libraries in small numbers, their inadequate geographical coverage, meagre resources in terms of collection, staff, etc. can hardly match the requirements of the society. The libraries thus have failed to make a mark and have been unable to achieve the objectives with which these have been created. Specially the public libraries need to be strengthened so as to provide services to larger number of people and easy access to information.

The working Group... on Modernisation of Library Services and Informatics (1984) (India) observed that our libraries face problems, like insufficient document resources, the requirement to serve communities and users that are not being served, lack of physical facilities, etc. It states :

> "More than 360 districts out of a total of 400 have district libraries. It is estimated that 1798 development blocks out of a total of 5023 blocks (36%) have block libraries, 41,828 villages out of a total of 5,75,937 (7%) have village libraries and 1280 towns of 2643 (48%) have town libraries."[1]
>
> Commenting on the present state of public libraries and their services the working Group observed:

> "Most of these public libraries concentrate on lending service. Other services or activities such as reference service, extension activities and others are, with few exceptions, not existent... [The] annual expenditure in the country on public libraries has been about...50 paise per literate person or, Rs. 0.03 on per capita basis. It is estimated that [they] have 1 book for every four [literate] persons... It is found that in actual terms only 15%-20% of the total literate population has an access to public library services."[2]

The above facts point out the weakness of the public libraries sector in India. This may be a replica of many other developing countries. It is natural to infer that the public libraries, at this level of growth can not be effective. When even a substantial number of literate people do not have access to library services, the fate of illiterate masses for whom no special services have been designed, can be easily imagined. Their right to have free access to information remains as statements of desirability in L&IS policies. In these conditions, it should not be surprising that L&IS profession does not enjoy better image and status vis-a-vis other professions in the society.

Why are we in this condition ? is a question before us. Who are responsible for this state of affairs - the state, the society, or the L&IS profession ? In part, all of these are to share the responsibility. The importance of information in the socio-economic development and the national reconstruction is no doubt recognised now by the governments and the social groups. It is reflected in the study of policy documents on L&IS. The National Policy on Library and Information

System (India), 1986, has rightly stated its objectives as follows:

> "Library and information sources are vital for all sectors of national activity. The availability of information, expeditiously and pinpointedly, supports all decision making processes at all levels. Relevent information accelerates the pace of national development. An informed citizen is an asset to a democratic system of government and the proper utilisation of information can improve the quality of citizens. The Government of India therefore realises the value of coordinating and upgrading the existing library and information systems and services and initiating new programmes relevant to our national needs..."[3]

It is our responsibility to let the masses know the importance of information, as there is lack of social awareness. Due to lack of awareness the demand and consumption of information is low. There is less pressure for information on libraries in rural areas. The reasons may be many for the passive approach of the society towards information. Either the people have not realised the importance of information and its impact on their lives, or the illitracy has been a limiting factor, or they are busy and preoccupied in fulfilling their basic necessities. Another factor for the lack of social awareness is the failure of L&IS profession in motiviation of masses. It is in part the responsibility of L&IS profession to create social awareness and create demand for information, be it for leisure, development of skills or for any other purpose. It is by creating public awareness that we can bring about the spread of libraries with the aim 'information for all', even in the remote areas, to reach all disadvantaged groups

in addition to others. It is with the active support of the masses that a positive change in the image and status of the L&IS profession in the society is possible.

The traditional image of the L&IS personnel has not changed among the users. Even today the users may find it difficult to diffentiate between the role played by librarian and the other workers in the library, or even between the role played by professional and non-professional workers in the library. More often the users approach senior librarian for grievance redressal (like in many other bureaucratic systems with formal hierarchical relations amongst the employees), rather than to seek the opinion of the librarian, or his evaluation and counselling (unlike they approach the doctors). The libraries, in a sense are working like a highly structured, hierarchical system. The concept of personalised approach (contrary to what Dr. S.R. Ranganathan advocated in his 'Five Laws') is missing, blurring further Therole of librarian and his image. The L&IS personnel need to change their attitude. They should redefine their job responsibilities, with the aim to come closer to the society, rather than remaining invisible. **The L&IS profession needs to redafine the professional and non-professional responsibilities** in the library. More formalised activities, or the activities which easily lend to mechanisation and require lesser professional input, should be made the responsibility of para-professional and non-professional staff. The managerial aspects - the role of a leader with his employees, a communicator with the public, a counsellor with the users, etc., need to be stressed and should occupy the L&IS personnel.

William J. Martin building up a case for 'deinstitutionalization' observed as follows about institutionalisation of library services :

> "[The] library service has become identified with bricks and mortar rather than with people and with the bureaucratic face of local government rather than with the persons of a caring profession."[4]

Martin also laid emphasis on giving a personalised service and to fulfill the needs of the contemporary society.

Education and research in L&IS has mostly been oriented towards internal problems. L&IS curriculum, both at the level of graduation as well as post-graduation, lays emphasis mainly on the areas and skills required for the organisation and mintenance of library collections, storage and retrival of documents, etc. Studies from consumers perspective are insignificant and contribute little to the curriculum. Even post PG level and research programmes in L&IS have not emphasised social aspects of librarianship. L&IS education at all levels should therefore be oriented towards users and social aspects of L&IS.

In many developing countries L&IS education programmes are not sufficient (unlike India where a large number of universities produce graduates and post-graduates in L&IS). Accreditation of library schools and registration of L&IS specialists is yet to be accepted in many countries. In order that we can produce L&IS graduates with confidence and professional zeal, the L&IS profession, through professional associations or by other means should adopt practices to have a check on the

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new entrants to the profession. The quality of entrants, coupled with the quality education, can be instrumental in social recognition of the profession.

The normative expectation of the society from L&IS profession need to be understood and defined. The simple characteristics of the society, that there is a population growth, that the society is becoming more and more complex, and that there is an ever increasing growth in the quantum of information, may be enough to create more libraries and to stock them well. However, these actions can not be sufficient to provide adequate information to match the social needs. Naturally, these alone can not be the bases for improvement in the image and status of L&IS profession. Our responsibilities do not end here. We need to go beyond what is obvious for the existence or mere survival of the profession. We should research the expectations of the society from the library and information profession, the relationship between the information and the society, and furtner we should address ourselves to the role of information in the social development. L&IS profession should act as a leader, not simply in providing desired information, but it should act as information specialist, prescribing with conviction the use of information. Studies should be carried out to understand the information, user and the librarian relationship, which in turn may influence operation in the library, to give boost to the impage and status of the profession.

The L&IS profession is itself a part of the society. The characteristics of the contemporary society, as well as its problems, influence L&IS profession as much as any other profession or social group.

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This should be the cause of a continuous change in outlook and social as well as professional responsibilities of L&IS profession. This should find continuous manifestation in our theories and practices of the profession. If is the responsibility of L&IS profession to facilitate, through making available information, the society to achieve its purpose or fulfill its expectations. For example the libraries can contribute a lot in adult education, literacy prgrammes, distance education programmes, etc. Otherwise its well recognised role may even be taken over by other social groups, if the profession does not take a lead. Currently the concept of open universities is taking roots in many developing countries. India already has a few of these, created during the past few years. The libraries should become a part of the chain to impart education, specially in these open university programmes, before some alternative structures are created for this purpose. By such acts, L&IS profession can become a valuable posession of any society, and this can lead to improvement in the image of the profession.

As may be true of many other developing countries, the society in India has not inculcated the reading habit. Despite voluminous production of books and serials, the information consumption is very low. The reasons may be, inappropriate reading material, high cost of acquisition, inaccessibility of information, etc., in addition to lack of reading habit. L&IS profession as purchaser can not only exercise discretion but also influence the producers and publishers. It can also influence the community as well as the government. The profession should avail of each opportunity to do so, to improve reading habit. It should cause library movement to help achieve free flow

of information. The profession should take upon it to persuade the governments to recognise the value of information to society by formulating national library and information policies. It should make efforts to remove the barriers in the free flow of information within the country as well as globally. For this purpose, the profession should make efforts to achieve relaxation in foreign exchange controls, import controls, mailing tariffs and communication rates, etc.

The challange of overcoming or minimising barriers in the free flow of information lies within the purview of responsibilities of the profession. It should be achieved by way of influencing society - the consumers; by way of motivating the government and other agencies - the partners in the creation of social institutions etc., and by way of adapting the role and responsibilities of the profession itself. We must continuously monitor the activities and functions of the profession, including libraries & information centres and L&IS education, and make adjustments in order to remain relevant to the society.

I will like to stop here after citing a thoughtful note by Prof. W.L. Sunders, which he made while thinking of the year 2001 and L&IS profession.

"...[The] nature of the demands on our profession will undergo a qualitative change. This keen appreciation of the importance of information will make for far better informed users. At present the ignorence of what really good library and information services can provide is such that many users are almost pathetically grateful and

impressed - by service that we, as professionals, know to be at a very simple and low level indeed. The world over, we have got away with very poor, levels of service. In the information-conscious world of the future, information will be regarded as a key resource; the level of expectation by users, of those whose professional concern is with the handling and availability of that resource will be much higher, much keener than today. Our efforts will be subjected to a much more informed and critical scrutiny than we have known so far. This surely can only be for the ultimate good of our profession."[5]

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IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE NEW DELHI 1992

PRESESSION SEMINAR
24-28 AUGUST 1992

Theme:

The Status, reputation and image of the library and information profession

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IMPROVING THE MARKET VALUE OF THE PROFESSION: EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Ms Christine O. Kisiedu (Legon, Ghana).

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IMPROVING THE MARKET VALUE OF THE PROFESSION:
EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Introduction

The task of this paper is to suggest the type of education and training that would improve the image of the information profession. Image creation depends on the calibre of output of professionals through whose performance in the creation and servicing of information systems the profession as a whole and its individual members will be seen by those who matter in society, as equal partners in the development equation.

The focus of my presentation is Sub-Saharan Africa but specific emphasis is on Anglophone areas from where my examples will be cited. To begin with, I intend to provide a brief background to the systems and training structures that have given rise to the problems we are facing now as a profession. Secondly, I will look at the current educational environment and try to analyze the factors that have made it difficult to change direction for the benefit of our professional image. Thirdly, I will point out for the consideration of all of us some of the many ways that have been suggested as viable educational alternatives for raising our professional image.

Background to Library Systems in Africa

The library and information profession is one of the legacies to Africa from the long historical and cultural links with Great Britain and the West generally. However, its development can be traced back only to the closing years of the

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first half of this century, even later in some parts of the continent. It was brought to Africa as the culture of a literate society with a long established book and reading tradition that had been nurtured over centuries into a definite and recognized way of life.'

A remarkable thing about this library culture is that it had evolved informally on the basis of apprenticeship and on the job training that had little to do with formally structured education with theoretical foundations. The situation was similar all over the Western world from where modern library development in Africa has had its antecedents and from which it has drawn inspiration. Theoretical foundations that invest a discipline or profession with respectability, maturity and prestige came very late to it.

In the case of the United States of America this happened towards the end of the 19th century, in 1887 when Melvil Dewey, the doyen of librarianship in that country, opened a school and had it attached to an institution of higher learning Columbia University. In neighbouring Britain across the Atlantic, it came even later, at the end of the second decade of this century, when the School of Librarianship was established at the University of London in 1919.

The University tradition of the profession was only about thirty years old and had not taken deep roots when the profession was transplanted into Africa. It was not the university-based profession that was brought. Benson E. Ekokal tells us in his that the Library Association which had been established in 1883,

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established in 1883, had designed and set up a syllabus for Library Assistants and examined them on the basis of that syllabus, on correspondence terms. Preparation for the examination was the personal responsibility of the candidate who pursued this while he worked. The system could thus be described as a formalization of the apprenticeship system, vocational in orientation. This was the basis and orientation of the library systems that Africa inherited from Britain, along with the personnel that set them up and ran them. The local personnel who were also trained to assist and take over from the initial expatriate British staff were also trained in this tradition.

The African societies into which the profession was transplanted were largely illiterate, without a book or reading culture to speak of. African societies had an oral tradition, though one that was not incompatible with or non-receptive to new ideas and cultures.

The Early Years

This background is important for a clearer understanding of the course that the library and information profession in Africa has taken. The initial years were good. The network of public libraries set up in Ghana (1950), Nigeria (the Unesco model at Enugu in 1953) in the High Commission of East Africa and later in the independent states of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania flourished because they were embraced by the new African political leaders and the literate few particularly in West Africa, as support for their high profile education agenda.[2] They saw in libraries the

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opportunity of a partnership for developing a new, enriched culture for their societies. When the partnership and the new culture did not work as planned the old prejudices against the profession were reinforced with local African embellishments. African librarians have been described as lacking vision, ineffective, elitist in their service orientation, worst of all, as a marginalized workforce.3

New Directions: University - Based Education

In trying to explain failed directions and chart out new ones, a little honest self assessment is always helpful in providing clarity of vision. Neill among others, leads the way in this kind of analysis. His prognosis of the situation is that the dream of an African library culture failed because the legacy was flawed. The apprenticeship training that placed Library Assistants in senior positions did not provide the incumbents with the necessary academic foundation which alone would have enabled them to appreciate the role they were expected to play. The requisite education that they require in order to be able to conceptualize the new directions and the framework within which they should operate was therefore deficient.

There were deliberate attempts to establish university-based library schools in Africa initiated by American influence with Carnegie funds. The first was at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria in 1960. It was followed in 1967 by a Ghanaian initiative at the University of Ghana. S.I.A. Kotei, a product of the old tradition but an active participant in the new move to

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establish Afro-centric systems (which incidentally also included a large British expatriate component) admits that the plan failed because those who took part in the foundation and nurturing of the foreign prototype systems subsequently became teachers in the library schools.4

The rate at which library and information studies schools have been established in Africa since then has been sufficiently remarkable for comment. However, Ouma remarks that most were originally set up to train library assistants.5

All this pointed to the fact that the way towards the realization of the objective of the profession in Africa to develop a typically African ethos and systems for African librarianship lay through a purposeful programme for training high level manpower with the vision to design and sustain such systems.

The appropriateness of the academic environment for fostering quality education is generally recognized. Paul Wassermann, in endorsement of the above, has said this of the university environment and university educators: "The intellectual base is found in professional schools where, within the scholarly framework of the university new ideas are inspired and tested ... ultimately through scholarly media. 6 This, in my estimation, is the answer to the problem of shortage of high level manpower that is to be found at all levels of the information profession, and which has caused the crisis of access to information, the worst image blot on the profession in Africa.

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Problems of Infrastructural Weakness

... The main problem in this process relates to the weaknesses of existing training facilities and their responses to the manpower problem. The report on the Addis Ababa seminar on Information and Informatics Policies for Africa (November-December 1988) saw the problem as manifesting itself in the following ways:

1. Africa-based training opportunities are limited;
2. Those available are oriented towards the traditional information services and institutions;
3. There are no retraining facilities for both professional personnel.7

... These issues need to be addressed if the education and training of our information workforce is to have any meaning and relevance. The first, limited training opportunities, seems an intractable problem. Very few information institutions exist in Africa that provide high level training. There is only one Ph.D awarding institution on the continent - the veteran Ibadan school. University of Ghana (and Ibadan) offers M.Phil courses in Library Studies and Archives. The rest, including Ghana, offer Graduate Diploma programmes.

The recent addition of Masters in Information Science courses at two special schools established in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and again in Ibadan, Nigeria, under the sponsorship of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Unesco promises a needed improvement in the situation. Ghana is hoping

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to engage one of the Ibadan school's recent graduates to strengthen the teaching of its information science and information technology courses.

It is a source of concern that in the training of information personnel, African institutions have placed emphasis on producing merely librarians, archivists and documentalists who do not possess any of the new skills in management, interpersonal communications and other qualities of the new culture of "enterprise" that are closely associated with the profession now. A colleague lamented the library orientation of his professional education which made a consultancy assignment with a UNDP team to set up a rural information system a taxing one. He recognized it as a deficiency in his training alright.

High-Technology and Changes on the Library and Information Science

Our curricula need to reflect the changes that are rapidly taking place in the information job market. These changes, catalysed by the new technologies, should be reflected where relevant. Forecasts and speculations on what is expected of the information professional of the 1990s, 8,9,10, list a dizzying array of skills and expertise that will make of us not only librarians but in addition managers, communicators, analysts of all types, politicians, businessmen and more besides. Fortunately, these observers assure us that for the foreseeable future, the mainstay will remain libraries.11 However we need to keep in tune with these developments to remain relevant.

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Whether we like it or not, African countries have embraced the computer and high technology culture. Though applications are nowhere near the levels they are in developed countries, the high-technology fever and the rate at which related machines are being imported into African countries demand a serious look at assessing the impact on the profession. We need to understand their use and learn to work with these tools in order to benefit from their enormous potential.

Computer literacy is limited in most African countries but awareness is spreading fast, though the proliferation of computer training centres and agencies present their own problems of standards and relevance in relation to courses offered. Two High-Technology exhibitions in Ghana in the past year-COMPUTECH I & II-have brought home forcefully the reality of the above statements.

Issues in Education and Training

Retraining and continuing education for information practitioners and educators is crucial for sustained professional and academic excellence. The confidence to deliver, whether on the job or in the classroom, depends on being abreast with the latest developments in one's area of expertise. Short courses on specific issues and conferences/seminars run locally or abroad do help but these, especially external ones, are limited. Funding to attend them is not easily available and African participants are seldom in a position to fund themselves. In this regard the German Foundation (DSE) my sponsors to this seminar, has been of

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great assistance to Africa professionals in general and those of Southern and Eastern Africa in particular. Unesco, IDRC, the Pan African Development Information System (PADIS), IFLA, FID and ICA have all offered assistance at various times and in various degrees.

Local meetings organised by local professions are excellent methods of "networking" at the personal, as opposed to the institutional level. Infrequent contacts among professionals in a given location can lead to isolationism and diminished relevance.

Watchers of the professional African information scene see as the greatest possible image booster, education and the skills for identifying two things: the information needs of the rural dweller and establishing systems to satisfy those needs. In a continent with 70% of its population in the rural areas, the majority of whom are either totally or semi-literate, our first duty as information professionals should be to them. Kingo Mchombu12 is a recognized advocate of this call to go back to the grassroots, although a small number of other scholars have done some work here.

The call is catching on. The latest seminar of the Commonwealth Library Association (COMLA), West African Chapter held in September 1991 in Accra, Ghana devoted one week of discussion to this theme.13

J. Richard Neill,14 a strong supporter of this new paradigm of library service, argues strongly for a shift in focus from

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service to the [illegible] minority to whom the profession in Africa has given its total (but unappreciated) attention to date. The form that the new systems must take are as yet not well defined but they should be "less formal, less book-oriented, more locally rooted and more precisely targeted at Africa's real and potential information users." The effort will involve identifying who the potential users or beneficiaries are. It is also a user awareness campaign that would confer visibility and recognition on the profession.

The Role of the Library School Curriculum In the Search for a new Professional Identify

The above programme requires a framework of operation which the curricula of our library schools should provide. Curriculum buildings is seen as the responsibility of the educator, but it should be based on team work comprising the educator as leader, the employing or consuming public for relevance of input regarding what the job market will accept, and the profession at large to ensure that basic professional tenets are followed and promoted. The results would inform what syllabus for teaching and research to evolve.

Such team work will strengthen the hand of the educator in presenting his curricular proposals to the University academic governing body for approval. The exercise confers benefits both as a means of advancing the profession and in raising the status of library and information work to the level of a university discipline.

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The rate of revision of the curricula of library schools in Britain, for example, is such that it invests them with a temporary quality. But the schools need to respond to the fast changing information environment in relation to their own programmes in order to stay in business. It is a way of canvassing student input as to what courses will lead to or will be useful in a job and what will not; what new skills have emerged since the last review exercise so that the necessary adjustments could be made.

The rate of curriculum revision is not as rapid in Africa. A curious practice of inviting foreign consultants to review curricula in African Library schools has been in force for a long time. This has been done either on a subject or overall basis. Local input tends to be limited to a few question sessions with staff. No other input is sought. The Department of Library and Archival Studies (DLAS), Ghana has been subjected to a number of such 'expert' review exercises on a number of occasions.

The opinion of this author is that such practices help nobody but the 'expert' whose Curriculum Vitae is enhanced thereby. Local professionals and educators should know the information environment better than anyone else. If the services of an outside expert should be required, he or she should only be part of the local team. A better alternative to this system is for a team to use any of the various manuals on curriculum development for the library and information sector that Unesco has issued from time to time.

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What to Teach in the Context of the Phenomenon of the Pluralist Curriculum: Issues to Consider

As noted already, the rapid technological changes in the past few decades have led to the emergence of plethora of activities, skills and services which all claim a relationship with information and equal attention in the curriculum. There is, therefore, need to decide what comes under basic, formal education and what is continuous. This is never an easy decision, particularly in Africa where avenues for continuing education tend to be limited. A decision needs to be taken, however. Here again, curricula guides available can offer direction. The modular approach may offer a convenient way out by treating topics as complete modules both within and out of the lecture room. The system also offers the advantage of a choice for a student. However, without a doubt, formal education should reside with academic institutions. Ideally, the professional associations should be largely responsible for continuing education and training but the schools need to assist more here than would normally be the case if the associations were stronger and better endowed.

The concept of harmonization is growing in popularity. Espoused by Unesco, IFLA, FID and the ICA since the early 1980s, African library schools have been encouraged to adopt it for the teaching of subjects that are known to be common to the three areas of Librarianship, Archives and Documentation services. These common areas have been identified as Management, User Studies, Information Technology, Information [illegible] and

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Techniques of Research in Information. Unesco ... actually produced some detailed work plan to be followed. ... the basis of expert papers presented at an International Symposium held in Paris in 1984 [5]. DLAS's syllabus represents a very good example of this practice. Its advantages include reduction to a single one the number of lecture sessions that may have been repeated in three or four programmes, thus saving staff time.

Other Issues

Other important issues include those of student and staff recruitment and quality in library and information schools in Africa. The latter are not priority areas of choice for graduate students. They tend to opt for the policy disciplines where prospects of advancement are far greater and the fields more prestigious. It is therefore not easy to recruit the 'best' students. Ph.D recruits are rare. Insistence on second class uppers would also reduce intake drastically and affect our survival!

A related issue is the preponderance of humanities graduate recruits in relation to recruits from the natural sciences. The profession in Africa has become humanities - based by default, but many issues of the modern information environment require the expertise of a professional with a science background. A judicious balance should be struck, but we should always aim to recount the best in order to maintain high educational and professional excellence, if we are to improve our image.

The question of staff qualification has been ... with

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already but it bears a direct relationship with student quality on the course. A strong cadre of teachers can improve student quality through confident, experienced teaching and counselling. Recruiting staff tends to be difficult for African library schools largely because of the inadequacy of training facilities referred to, and its attendant shortage of expertise. It has taken DLAS more than a year to find someone to teach information Science because the University of Ghana will not accept a masters degree without a full year's research component. It is a frustrating experience but sound academic policy.

CONCLUSION

The above is an attempt to address a few of the issues that I feel information professionals and educators in Africa should be deeply concerned with in the attempt at building bridges between ourselves and our consuming public. Not all the important issues have been addressed. An issue such as what to do about the burgeoning para-professional group in terms of an upgrading programme remains untouched. The debate concerning of which is more to blame for the sorry state of Africa's information profession - whether it is the lack of vision of the professionals or the lack of appreciation by the bureaucrat of the role of information in development - cannot be dismissed in a paragraph. But the point of the argument - indifferent funding of and responses to African information pursuits-remain a major constraint to development.

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I hope, however, that what has been said [illegible] sufficiently strongly the search for new directions in the education for librarianship in information work in Africa. The challenge to the profession is to give form and substance to these concerns.

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IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE NEW DELHI 1992

PRESESSION SEMINAR
24-28 AUGUST 1992

Theme:

The Status, reputation and image of the library and information profession

93-PRESESSION-E

IMAGE, STATUS AND REPUTATION: SOME OBSERVATIONS

Russell Bowden

First Vice-President, IFLA

and

Deputy Chief Executive

The Library Association, United Kingdom

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LEAD PAPER FOR DELHI IFLA PRE-CONFERENCE SEMINAR

IMAGE, STATUS AND REPUTATION: SOME OBSERVATIONS

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and

Deputy Chief Executive

The Library Association, United Kingdom

Librarianship is not the oldest profession in the world. I will leave you to guess what that is. Nevertheless, librarianship is one of the older professions, preceding medicine and not much younger than law and religion. Two major inventions have provided it with two major periods of change and innovation. The first, in the past, being the invention of printing and the development of book production as we know it today. The second is now with us in the form of the adaptation of the products of the information technology revolution to librarianship and information work. The changes in western industrialised societies from those shaped and conditioned by the Industrial Revolution into their present forms as Information Societies has been influenced primarily by the information technology revolution. This change should have provided librarians with ample opportunities to play central and significant roles in the development of these new information societies and as a consequence, the public's perception of the image, status and reputation of the profession ought never to have been higher. But this is not the case. Where are the indications of the majority of librarians taking on new responsibilities, not for the management of the physical materials in their collections but the information content inside these materials, through the developments of analytical skills and knowledge to help users through what is fast becoming an information over-load where provision is not paramount but the quality, accuracy and up-to-dateness is?

Of course we have to ask ourselves, are we obsessively concerned with the image, status and reputation of our profession? We have to ask ourselves, are we correct to be concerned with these problems and the situations that they represent? If we are, then we have to ask ourselves, what should we do to alter them? We have to ask ourselves, if we want to change our image and the status we need to what and to where. That is what this seminar is about.

The profession historically might be nearly as old as those for law and for religious practice and older than medicine and surgery and management and

accountancy and engineering and perhaps architecture, but the difference between them and us is that their status in society is assured and ours still is not despite Islamic records indicating, for instance in Turkey in the XI and XII centuries a high regard for librarians. Here, in India a quotation I recently came across records:

> Librarianship was also considered an esteemed profession in ancient Kerala. In the scholarly home libraries, and Salais only highly educated persons could work as librarians. The person who kept the documents had to be knowledgeable about the thought contents of the documents in his care. This tradition of scholar librarians continued up to the medieval period. The copper plate grant of king Trailokyamalla, a Chalukyan ruler, in 1058 AD furnishes details of an educational institution maintained by him. It was equipped with a library with six Saraswathi Bhandarikas (librarians). The inscription further furnishes details regarding distribution of land which tells us the dignified and honoured position the librarians had in temple colleagues and other cultural and educational institutions.[1]

We need to consider why our status is so low. I contend that part of the reason must be that law, medicine and religion, architecture and engineering are professions concerned with life and death. There's nothing more important to societies than such issues. Their status is also assured because the public views their operations as being undertaken by professionals and, more importantly, the people actually providing services to users see, and understand, themselves to be professionals. That is not always true of librarians and information workers. The literature of librarianship is occupied still with debates and discussions as to whether librarianship is a profession or not. Some believe it to be so, others not. The latter understanding its practice to involve little beyond a set of skills and techniques.

Judgements can be made. Criteria exist against which to measure an occupation's professionalism. They vary in their wording but essentially there are six criteria. I shall take those of Abraham Flexner, formulated in 1915 and contained in Jesse Shera's book *The Foundations of Education for Librarianship.*[2] Flexner believed there to be six essential criteria and they are:

> Professions involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility;
> They derive their raw material from science and learning;
> This material they work up to a practical and definite end;
> They possess an educationally communicable technique;
> They tend to self-organisation;
> They are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation.

'Professional' in the dictionary definition means: a declaration or an avowal; a declaration of belief in a religion; a vocation, calling, especially one that involves some branch of learning or science.

To practice a profession, in my view, is not just to practice a set of skills. It also incurs the undertaking of responsibilities on behalf of society. For instance, those of the medical profession are easy to observe, concerned as they are with the public's health and hygiene. Men and women of religion are concerned with moral and ethical values in society. The law is concerned with the maintenance of law, order and justice in the community. For me the library and information services profession has a clear social responsibility. It has concerns for

information. They are two-fold: to maintain the free and unfettered flow of information (along with the press and the media, e.g. to oppose censorship in all forms); the second is to protect the rights of access of every individual to the information that they seek. A clarion call that the profession has ignored. It is enshrined in the report of the UNESCO NATIS Conference in Paris in 1974 but it is better expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and import information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers'. It is this task that is unique to the library and information profession. The American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom is a good example of the profession taking responsibilities in this area. We must hold onto it. There exist real risks that librarians, faced with managing their operations within different organisational structures imposed upon them by local governments or other parent organisations, or in adapting, as they must, to new management theories and techniques, that they will move too far to identify with management and throw out the bibliographical and librarianship skills that are unique to our profession. Already there are dangers apparent in Europe of what is being called 'de-skilling'. They must be resisted. It is the skills, techniques and knowledge of librarianship and information science that make us different from any other profession and therefore allows us to claim a position in society that identifies us as different from the others and for which we should be properly rewarded, recognised and remunerated.

Needless to say perhaps, but nevertheless worth re-iterating, that the library and information science profession's view of itself is conditioned to a large extent by the attitude to it of the world 'outside' the profession. In many cases that public's view of us is almost negligible - we are almost invisible to them. Why should that be when, in theory at least, but probably, as I have already indicated, not in practice, as professionals we are involved with one of the most important commodities in today's new and post-industrial societies - information?

I hope that the seminar will address these issues. I think that they are fundamental to our image, to our status and to the reputation that we want in society. In the seminar you will have to consider whether you agree with this view.

There are many other problems that librarians and information workers believe affect the public's image of them. These include the idea that the general public has little understanding of what library and information workers do or of the responsibilities that they carry - the 'invisibility' factor to which I have just referred. Those responsibilities are not small if we consider those of a university librarian who will be responsible for providing services to the whole of his academic and student communities, or the responsibilities of a public librarian for buildings, mobiles, stock and staff, or the responsibilities of an information scientist working in a research laboratory or those of children's librarian for the type of literature and material that the young people read. Nevertheless, there is a mystique that the profession sometimes seems intent on sustaining which actually may be harmful to the public's view of the profession. Certainly there is the problem that the very name 'librarian' derives from, or is associated with, the name of the building in which professionals work.

Nursing is a profession in a hospital but the public understands what a nurse does (even if they may never have met one) yet it finds it difficult to understand what librarianship involves and that it is a profession and not just work inside a building called a library.

Expectations by users of the quality of the services provided are not always clearly understood and sometimes, one has to admit, those services at point of delivery leave a lot to be desired. The public observes the librarian issuing books over a desk and arranging books in some order on a shelf and as a consequence it places librarians on a scale, and in comparison with other professions, at a very low point near the bottom. In many countries the profession is almost entirely comprised of women. Unfortunately, in many countries the place of women in society is not particularly high and therefore the ability of librarians to make contact with government and with policy makers at the highest levels is inhibited.

In some countries there is an overproduction of librarians from the departments of library and information studies onto the employment market. Any market-woman will confirm that if there is a glut of eggs onto the market their price will fall. So is it with librarians. In some cases the very quality of the eggs is poor because the type of education and the quality of it imparted as students to the new librarians entering work for the first time is extremely low. I am not certain that the educational curricula and the training and subsequent continuing professional development opportunities are being exploited and adopted adequately enough for them to serve as the key to change. In addition, not unnaturally, recruitment depends on 'like attracting like' so that the opportunities for unorthodoxies to enter the profession are constrained. It is revolutions, wars, arguments and disagreements that attract the media and the public's attention not quiet unassuming evolution. A professional organisation's primary responsibility to society is to protect the quality of the services that the professionals in it (as its members) provide to the users of their services - in our case libraries. A library association, therefore, has as its most important function the protection of standards of performance by the professionals in its membership. Not all library associations operate with a Code of Ethics or Conduct which is a requirement for this task. Not all library associations even undertake this task. Not all library associations are organised efficiently enough to be able to undertake it. It is therefore a *sine qua non* that a library association has to be strong, effective and efficiently managed if the image and status of its profession is to be improved.

But the opposite is often the case. Instead of a single national association there are a number representing different areas of practice or different knowledge and skill groups. We use our skills as classifiers to our detriment. We divide into small dis-united groups instead of forming a strong unified, single national association. A British colonial maxim was 'divide and rule'. We are divided and so we are ruled.

The actual work and responsibilities of many professional librarians are often at low levels, particularly when compared to those of other professionals in the parent organisation within which libraries are located, whether it be within universities, local or central government. Some librarians believe that a lack of legal status or statutorily-recognised qualifications from the professional body inhibits the perceptions by the public of our status. I'm not sure that this is not a

chicken and egg situation. Statutory recognition is only arrived at when it reflects what the public believes and when it believes it to be deserved. I suggest therefore that any required statutory recognition will be one of the rewards that will have to wait some time to be achieved even if it remains one of the highest priorities. We have to get our own house in order before statutory recognition allows entry onto an official Register which is approved in law (as it is for architects, engineers and the medical profession) and which provides the professional with a right to practice because of the agreed and accepted standards of performance that he, or she, is guaranteed to uphold. Have we, as librarians, justified that right? Without doubt, statutory recognition would provide the status we want, but it won't come of its own accord. It will only come when it reflects what the public already perceives and agrees about us.

Underlying all these many, and varied, problems is perhaps an even more basic one. It is that after centuries of work in libraries there is still no agreement amongst us as to what defines librarianship and information work. There is no agreement on what lies at the core that identifies librarianship and emphasises its uniqueness and difference to other professions; or about what are the priorities within it or the relationship of this core to external priorities such as the necessity to possess management, political and marketing skills. In the UK, in an exercise being undertaken by the Library Association for the Government's Department of Employment, investigating the establishment of national vocational qualifications (i.e. work at the paraprofessional and technician but not yet professional levels) outside consultants had to be engaged to undertake work to define what was called the 'occupational map' and what are the areas of employment within which librarianship and information science skills are practised. The definition now agreed by the profession is:

> To determine/anticipate, stimulate and satisfy the information needs of existing and potential users/clients through the design and operation of systems for creating, synthesising, gathering, categorising, storing, providing access to, retrieving, interpreting, and presenting information from all media and personal sources, in a cost effective manner, and by so doing, speeding the flow of information to improve the business and social environment of an open society.
>
> Information is defined in its broadest sense as meaning data, facts, imaginative materials, ideas opinions, and cultural values, in a variety of media ranging from the printed form, through audio and visual media to electronic processes and including in house personal knowledge and external sources and referrals.

There is a briefer one which reads:

> To anticipate, determine, stimulate and satisfy the information needs of existing and potential clients.

We have to ask, are the issues I have outlined the real problems affected status and recognition that the profession needs to address or are they blown up out of all proportion when in reality its status is easily resolved by a marketing exercise? I believe that one markets a product when one is certain what the product is, and what level of quality it provides and one has undertaken market research to ascertain its importance on the potential market. I hope that the discussions in this seminar will be concerned with that 'product'. I think that we can concentrate on

marketing the product when we have answered some of the issues raised in this paper - some of which will be, of course, presented in more detail by others as we progress through the seminar.

It was these problems that IFLA was asked to address in 1986 when th. issues of status were presented to the Professional Board as a result of a pre-conference seminar such as this in Japan. IFLA referred it to the Round Table for the Management of Library Associations. My Executive Committee considered some of the problems passed to it and accepted them as hypotheses that needed to be proved and accepted or disapproved and rejected. In order to test the hypothe.. it agreed with the Profes onal Board to undertake a programme of work and in 1988 it started and presented the results of a literature search to the RTMLAs Open Meeting in Paris. Thereafter it embarked upon empirical research, part-funded by the Professional Board and the NBLC in Holland (to which the RTMLA owes much gratitude) using the services it provided of a researcher, Hans Prinz, to prepare a detailed questionnaire which was sent to library associations around the world and subsequently backed up by interviews held in a number of countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. By 1991 an interim report was ready for presentation to the RTMLA's Open Meeting at the IFLA Conference in ..scow. The report is now being finalised and some of the results in it will be placed before you during this seminar. A preliminary report appears in *IFLA Journal* volume 2 just published. Among many questions that we shall put to you, the participants in this seminar, will be: are the findings of the report recognisable and therefore acceptable? It is important that they are 'owned' by you because they will form the basis of RTMLA further work.

To focus our attention on the objectives of the seminar for a moment. They have been circulated to you but let me remind you of them: Recent surveys and research have re-emphasised the problems relating to the status, reputation and image of the library, information science and documentation profession and their associations. These problems inhibit the ability of association members to function effectively.

The objectives of the seminar are, among others, to consider these findings and make recommendations:

(a) to IFLA and other relevant organisations for the development of their policies;
(b) for programmes and activities to improve the status, reputation and image of the profession;
(c) for the efficient management and organisation of professional association.

By the end of the seminar we have to have considered: what can be done? We have to consider: what are the priorities for action? We have to decide who we will recommend to take that action.' As this paper has indicated and the Hans Prinz research proves, the problem is not a simple one. Indeed it is not one, single, problem anyway. But a complex web of problems each inter-twined with the next. They relate to all aspects of library and information work; they relate to education and training; they relate to the need to continue to upgrade skills and competencies through continuing professional development programmes and a host of others that this paper only briefly touches upon. To assist you to grapple with these issues, in addition to a presentation of the research findings by Hans Prinz, you will hear papers about the perception of the profession; the responsibilities of

professional librarians and information workers; about the need for market value and recognition; the problems and benefits of statutory recognition and on the management of professional associations using the UNESCO **Guidelines for the Management of Professional Associations in the Fields of Archives, Library and Information Work**. The organisers of this seminar believe that without strong and efficient and effectively managed library associations there is no infrastructure to undertake the work that you will identify as necessary to improve image, reputation and status.

In drawing to a close, let me remind you that this is a seminar with very practical aims and objectives. You, as a participant, have the responsibility to indicate to the profession worldwide through IFLA and within your country, through your reporting back to your national associations, the actions that will be required in the future to improve the image, status and reputation of the librarianship, information science and documentation professions.

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IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE NEW DELHI 1992

PRESESSION SEMINAR
24-28 AUGUST 1992

Theme:

The Status, reputation and image of the library and information profession

94-PRESESSION-
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MANAGEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS: GUIDELINES

by

David R. Bender, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Special Libraries Association
Washington, D.C.

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MANAGEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS: GUIDELINES

by

David R. Bender, Ph.D.
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Special Libraries Association
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Introduction

According to the American Society of Association Executives, "Associations are organized by a group of people who have joined together voluntarily in order to achieve common goals and solve common problems by sharing information and working together."

This need for people to form associations to work together to achieve common goals can be found as far back as the ancient cultures in Rome and the Orient. One of the initial ties that bound people together, more than 3,000 years ago, was trade.

However, the craft and merchant guilds of the Middle Ages were the first organizations to closely resemble the associations of today. The guilds were formed primarily to ensure fair wages and working conditions -- goals that many modern associations seek for their members.

Within the library profession, associations are formed to achieve a broad diversity of goals on behalf of their members --

education and training, government relations, public relations, publications, and research, to name a few.

What ties all of these activities together is that ultimately they impact the image of the profession -- with our peers, our supervisors, and our patrons. These activities collectively help create an environment in which members of the association can develop a professional identity and competence and operate effectively.

The Mission Statement and Goals

Every association must have a mission -- a driving force that unites the membership. The mission is the association's reason for being. It answers the question, "What needs of the potential members are currently unmet or unsatisfactorily met but which could be filled by this association?"

Philip Kotler states in his book, Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations, that an association's mission must be "feasible, motivating, and distinctive." The mission must be realistically attainable, or the association will guarantee its own failure. The mission must truly represent the desires of the potential membership, or they won't join and work on behalf of the organization. The mission must be significantly different from those of similar associations, or the organization will be

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superfluous and will not attract membership.

At SLA, our current mission is "to advance the leadership role of its members in putting knowledge to work for the benefit of the general public and decision-makers in industry, government, the profession; and to shape the destiny of our information society."

This mission, which was formally adopted by the SLA Board of Directors in October 1989, reflects the Board's recognition of how much the profession's image impacts the environment in which the members operate.

Accompanying the mission statement should be written goals that more specifically describe the actions that the association plans to take to accomplish its mission. These goals may be measurable and have a timetable.

SLA's goals pertain to three broad areas: the individual members, the collective association, and the environment in which the association operates.

To keep the association on course, the SLA staff is required to match up its accomplishments with these goals prior to each meeting of the board of directors. This is a very valuable exercise, because it allows management to make certain that all activities really relate to organizational goals and that no

goals are being inadvertently overlooked.

Bylaws

Well-written bylaws are important to association management. They help establish organizational structure and working relationships.

Judith Walker, an account executive with Smith, Bucklin & Associates, an association management firm headquartered in Chicago, wrote that bylaws are also important to an organization's image. "Well-constructed bylaws are a useful tool in building the organization and attracting new members, too, because they reflect the image of an organization that is professional, well-managed, and aware of its legal responsibilities."

Some of the items that may be included in association rules of procedures are:

* membership categories
* membership services
* board of directors size and responsibilities
* nomination and election procedures
* committee structure and responsibilities
* procedures for amending the bylaws

Program and Service Selection

Association activities should be offered only if they directly address association goals or if they will generate revenue needed to fund other activities that address association goals.

The trend in associations today is "unbundling" -- offering a small number of activities for free as a benefit of membership but making others available on a fee basis.

The principles behind this are that dues can be maintained at a modest level only if limited products and services are included in the core package, and that it is more equitable if only those that choose to use a service have to pay for it.

An important management decision is determining what will be in the package that all members receive. These should include the services that the majority of members are most likely to need or desire.

Certainly the association newsletter or newspaper should be part of the package, because members expect to receive regular communications from their association. However, a timely, well-written newsletter also benefits management, because it enhances the association's image with its members by keeping them aware of

its accomplishments. The newsletter may also be distributed externally to enhance the association's image with external audiences.

Small associations often can find outside vendors to provide certain services, such as insurance, to their members more economically than the associations could themselves. In this way, some revenue can be generated with very little expenditure of staff resources.

An activity that may simultaneously achieve several association goals is an educational seminar. The sessions enhance the professionalism of the attendees, the meeting provides members with an opportunity for networking, and revenue may be generated.

A guiding principle in association activities is "Know the Membership." It's easy to make assumptions about what members want or need, but the assumptions easily could be wrong. At SLA, I and the rest of the staff receive a variety of member input to help us determine what activities to offer.

A major source of information about SLA membership services is its Super Survey -- an in-depth needs assessment questionnaire that even allows the membership to rank current services in order of importance to them.

However, a low-cost method of product research that SLA uses successfully is focus groups. Almost any time management is with members, an hour or two can be allocated to letting a small group of members air their views on a specific subject.

Judith Walker offered this advice about planning products and services:

> While planning your program of benefits, remember that you're really no different than a company offering new products to consumers. You need to consider all the facets that would go into a marketing operation: the product, the price, the promotion, and the distribution.

In addition to the products and services offered to directly benefit members, such as seminars, the association may also conduct activities that impact the profession collectively, such as government relations or public relations programs. These activities are very image-oriented and are often high priorities to many members, so it behooves management to allocate ample resources to these efforts and report progress regularly.

Small associations inevitably must rely heavily on volunteer members to manage programs. The advantage is that members are personally familiar with the issues and needs of the profession. The disadvantage is that they often don't have the spare time or energy that is required.

In working with volunteers, association management must make sure that responsibilities are carefully spelled out and must regularly monitor progress. Then management must exercise patience, because volunteers are well-intentioned or they wouldn't have volunteered, but they will have other responsibilities that will sometimes take precedent over their association assignments.

At SLA, each individual program has a one-year plan of its own to provide a road map by which to make sure activities are on time and headed in the correct direction. The program management plans demonstrate how the programs fulfill goals of the association strategic plan, list specific actions and their deadlines, and describe the contributions the programs will make to association growth.

If an association cannot afford a full-time staff person, outside consultants may be the best approach for managing projects requiring specialized skills, such as planning a meeting or publishing a newsletter.

Conclusion

Once the association is organized and funded, optimistic, positive leadership is the most important service that an association executive can give to members. An association executive must move members to innovate, to improvise, and to accept change.

Recently I read about the challenges that a saguaro cactus faces in reaching maturity. Only one out of every 275,000 seeds will reach that stage. To survive initially, the young cactus must grow in the shade of another plant. It will take 25 years to grow the first two feet, 75 years before it can branch out, and 100 years until it reaches adulthood. But at maturity, the cactus can be more than 50 feet tall, weigh more than 10 tons, and live for 250 years.

Similarly, a professional association faces many daunting challenges in reaching maturity. According to the American Society of Association Executives, association management means problem solving, coordinating people with diverse backgrounds, desires and needs, learning to say "no," knowing when to say "yes," managing one's own and others' time, and continuing to grow in competence and understanding.

Association leadership must know what's on the association's mind

and what it is capable of.

It must steer a path through a maze of obstacles to create and maintain an effective organization, but the end result will be an association that significantly enhances the power and prestige of the profession.

PRESESSION SEMINAR
24-28 AUGUST 1992

Theme:

The Status, reputation and image of the library and information profession

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E

Statutory Recognition of Library and Information Profession

by

A. O. Banjo

Nigerian Institute of International Affairs

Lagos, Nigeria

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PROFESSIONAL STATUS AND RECOGNITION

According to William Paton, the fifth attribute of a profession is 'recognition of status by one's colleagues or by the state.'[1] We may go further to affirm that with regard to the library profession, as workers in non-profit organizations, the "legitimation (of their profession) is highly dependent on recognition and funding by governmental bodies."[2] Although recognition by peers, members of other professions, the users of library services, and members of the general public contribute toward shaping the status and image of librarians, recognition by government is by far the most crucial. Government and governmental bodies are the major, in some contexts the sole, employers of the services of members of the library profession. The level of government recognition is therefore a reliable index of how the profession is viewed by the rest of the society. It would also have an important effect on the scale of library and information service provided, its level of funding and the grading and remuneration of library and information services personnel vis-a-vis other personnel in the public service.

Although the recent survey by Prins and de Gier[3] did not seek specific information on statutory recognition for library and information profession it can be inferred that their general conclusion covers the subject. The main conclusion of the survey, and one shared by others who have written on the subject, is that the image, status and reputation of the library and information profession is generally low in the perception of members of the profession themselves as well as the general public.[4,5,6] Thus librarians are usually ranked lower than members of other professions such as medical doctors, lawyers, engineers and business executives in order of occupational prestige or status.[7]

The Prins/de Gier study found that "invisibility" or poor public appreciation of the work of librarians ranked as the highest factor accounting for this situation. Librarians' relatively poor remuneration, the marginal role they are perceived to be playing in economic development are two other important factors identified. The study also found that the general public is generally unaware of the social responsibilities of libraries and the scale of their financial responsibilities. It would appear therefore that the key factors accounting for the low status and poor image of librarians is the fact that their work is not properly understood by the general public which includes employers, library authorities and government. Consequently their contributions to national development is not appreciated. This has led to the operation of a vicious cycle: poor public recognition engendering poor funding which in turn produces poor quality of service, which further contributes to low public esteem of libraries and librarians.

This paper discusses statutory recognition of library and information work in the context of the general seminar theme. It looks at various laws enacted to support library and information services in general and the capacity of the library profession to sustain government support for its activities. As it has not been possible in the time available to undertake any empirical study for relevant data, examples will be drawn largely from Nigeria with which the writer is familiar as well as the literature which was readily available at the time the paper was being prepared to which specific references will be made.

STATUTORY RECOGNITION OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION WORK

Statutory recognition of library and information work refers to the laws enacted by government on a variety of library-related subjects. Such legislation confers legitimacy on

library and information work and empowers library authorities to obtain necessary resources to provide their authorised services.

Statutory Provision of National Library and Information Services

It is generally held that the enactment of appropriate legislation is the most desirable basis for establishing national public library systems. The Unesco-sponsored seminar on the development of public libraries in Africa recommended that "the permanence and development of public library service (should) be assured by appropriate legislation."[8] Such legislation would prescribe its administrative structure and sources of funding and would guarantee government's commitment to its continued provision. Since that seminar, thi· has become the conventional wisdom in library circles in Africa and the provision of a legal basis for national public library systems has been widely advocated as the recipe for their rapid development.[9,10] A similar resolution was passed at the Manila regional seminar for Asia and Pacific areas in 1964, urging participants to convince their governments to introduce legislation to coordinate the activities of libraries on a national scale.[11]

The importance of legislation also has a special meaning in the context of the developing countries where the establishment of modern libraries is a recent phenomenon and where legislation has been the basis of the founding of similar social institutions such as universities, medical services, research institutions etc. In the absence of any relevant tradition, the provisions of the laws setting up such institutions become the basis of their existence and the guarantee of their future development, setting out their structure, functions, the powers and the status of their functionaries in relation to others, their financial provision etc.

Nevertheless not every country has adopted this model.

In Anglophone West Africa, Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia have such legislation.[12] In Nigeria because of its Federal administrative structure which makes the provision of library services a regional rather than a federal subject before its present state structure, only the former Eastern region had a public library service which was established by legislation. It has been generally acknowledged that for that reason the region was ahead of the other two regions in the quality of its public library service.

Legal provisions for the establishment and maintenance of library and information services are not limited to public library systems. They are also considered to be the most desirable basis for the establishment of National Libraries.[13] According to a survey conducted by Bagrova National libraries in 85 countries, 45 of which are Developing countries, were established by statute.[14] The Lenin State Library maintains a valuable data-base of National Library legislation worldwide which should assist those interested in comparative studies of such legislation.

There are also examples of statutes providing for library and information services as part of laws of parent institutions such as universities, colleges, research bodies etc. The laws provide a secure basis for such services and a justification for their staffing and annual financial provisions.

Provision of National Coordinating Bodies

A national coordinating body for the library and information services within the country creates conditions for a more effective use of the total stock of information in the constituent library sub-systems within the nation. The case for the coordination of library

services is even stronger in most developing countries which can ill-afford the cost of under-utilised resources where such services are almost entirely government funded. This is also consistent with Unesco recommendation urging countries to establish such national bodies by legislation and to make them directly responsible to government.[15] Boadi and Harvard-Williams found no existing models of such national coordinating bodies established by legislation in their study covering Anglophone West Africa. In Ghana and Liberia where such bodies exist they were not established by legislation. Reference will be made later in this paper to Nigeria where a memorandum has been submitted to government for the establishment of a National Commission for Libraries whose objectives are expected to cover a coordinating role.

Legal Deposit and Bibliographical Control

Statutory provisions for legal deposit and bibliographic control is an important area of library legislation empowering a designated library to receive by law from publishers and to document the national publishing output and participate in the international exchange of bibliographical data under the Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) programme. This function is usually given to the National library.

In Anglophone West Africa, only Liberia does not have a legal deposit law. Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria have legal deposit laws and publish national bibliographies.

Statutes Defining the Status of Library Personnel

In a number of laws setting up universities and research institutions the positions of

heads of the libraries have been enhanced by their being specified as "statutory officers" or "principal officers." In Nigeria, it was the 1954 Ordinance to reconstitute the University College, Ibadan which first established the library and the University Librarian by law.[16] The librarian was mentioned as a member of Senate and Statute 7 (c) provides that "the librarian shall be responsible for developing the library of the College as a centre of learning and research and for implementing the policy of the college in respect thereof." Subsequent university statutes in Nigeria have followed this tradition of conferring the status of a "principal officer" on University Librarians while other library professional personnel have generally enjoyed "academic status" within their institutions.

Similarly in research institutes where the university usage has been adopted in their statutes e.g. Nigerian Institute of International Affairs and Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, the Directors of the libraries are by law principal officers while other library staff are accorded academic status. It must however be pointed out that these provisions are challenged from time to time by the teaching and research staff and librarians generally have to fight to retain this parity of status with their teaching and research colleagues. Part of the price which librarians have to pay in such settings is the requirement to "publish or perish" in keeping with the academic tradition.

Register of Librarians

The practice of maintaining registers of practicing professionals with legal backing is an established one particularly in the Medical, Legal and Engineering Professions. Such practice enables the professions to regulate and control professional practice and prescribe the standard of knowledge and skill to be attained by persons seeking to become members

or retain their membership. The application of this practice to the library profession raises a number of problems such as the definition of who would qualify to register as a librarian and the concept of a code of ethics.

Nevertheless, perceiving that the operation of such a register is now in practice the acknowledged credential for professional status, the Nigerian Library Association has since 1982 been trying to implement a resolution calling for appropriate legislation for the setting up of such a Register. It therefore submitted to government a " Draft Bill to Incorporate the Council for the Registration of Librarians in Nigeria" modelled after those of the Medical, Legal and Engineering Professions. It is instructive that the effort has met with very little enthusiasm on the part of a succession of regimes (military and civilian) in the ten years since it has been submitted to government . This is partly because unlike Medicine and Law government does not think that it needs to protect the society against the unauthorised practice of librarianship. Indeed the most sympathetic comment to date on the subject was from a Minister whose advice to the Association was that rather than trying to regulate the practice of their extremely few members they should seek to encourage more practitioners to join their fold and expand the present scope of library services! This was how the Association submitted another a Memorandum on the establishment of a National Commission for Libraries.

ROLE OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS

It is generally agreed that one of the most important activities of national and international library associations is "representations and advice to governments on legislation and other government action for the promotion of library services."[17] In a 1975 survey, 50

national associations in 31 countries reported being very active in promoting national legislation.[18] It is not clear how many of these are located in developing countries however, as information from elsewhere would suggest otherwise. In his study of the attitude of librarians and information professionals to the Nigerian Library Association, Lawal found that "legal recognition" ranked highest among areas requiring improvement in the activities of the Nigerian Library Association.[19] This is hardly surprising for, as stated earlier, the Association has in the last ten years been seeking to implement, without much success so far, two resolutions requiring government legislation. This dismal record of achievement on the part of the Nigerian Library Association in discharging this primary responsibility appears to be consistent with what has been reported about similar associations in Africa.[20,21] The following summary of the Nigerian experience may therefore be instructive:

Firstly there would appear not to be much public interest in matters relating to library services. The evidence for this is that during the last ten years when the Library Association has been canvassing support for its legislation, government has enacted similar laws for other professions.

Secondly the Library Association's efforts have not been helped by regime instability and changes of administration on the Nigerian political scene. Thus it has so far had to deal with one civilian and two military administrations and at least four Ministers of Education charged with library matters. Meanwhile, there is now a prospect of another change of administration - the return of civilian rule by the end of 1992.

These changes on the national scene have been paralled by similar changes in the leadership of the Library Association itself. Since the struggle started, the third President

is now about to leave office.

Finally the Nigerian experience illustrates perhaps the uncertainties involved with decision making under military rule. In theory the channels are not as complicated and the process is potentially simpler but a lot depends partly on the standing of the interested party and the perception of a few key government functionaries of the relevance of the proposed legislation to their programme. In the final analysis therefore civilian regimes may provide more scope for lobbying and persuasion than their military counterparts.

It would therefore appear that the improvement of skills in legislative activities is an important area where the capacity of library associations in Africa and possibly other Third World countries needs to be improved. Since in this area, the American Library Association is the acknowledged leader, a few lessons may be drawn from its well documented experience, after making necessary allowances for the different cultural and political setting that obtain in Third World countries.[22,23]

The first requirement is to strengthen existing library associations and ensure that senior and experienced members of the profession are encouraged to make contributions in key areas such as those relating to the writing of memoranda and lobbying members of the legislative body.

Secondly, having regard to the importance of this activity, each library association should set up a standing committee to pursue its legislative agenda.

Thirdly, since librarians are usually handicapped by their small numbers in every society, the American expedient of working in coalition with other organisations interested in library legislation is a very good one. Such potential allies are to be found in library and

educational organisations and associations, associations of authors and publishers, civic leaders, etc.

Finally the Round Table for the Management of Library Associations should assist in compiling guidelines and giving advice on setting up legislative programmes to interested association

CONCLUSION

Statutory recognition is both important and useful in the definition of the status of library and information profession and in legitimizing library and information services. But it has significant limits.

One of these is set by the capacity of library associations to work through the effort- and time-consuming legislative procedures to achieve the desired legislation.

Secondly, even when they have been achieved, statutory provisions are, in the final analysis, merely legal instruments. Whether a piece of legislation is a living instrument for achieving the purposes set out in it, often depends on human efforts which ensure that the purposes of the legislation are sustained from year to year. This point can be illustrated with the difficulties encountered by many libraries charged with implementing legal deposit laws due largely to the pervasive ignorance among publishers about the existence and purposes of the laws.[24,25]

On the other hand, where the quality of staff or service fail to match the expectations set by any particular statutory provision a credibility gap results. Thus in institutions where library staff have been accorded "academic status" they are under pressure to justify such status to the rest of the academic community. Similarly "librarians" working within the public

service have sometimes lost their "professional" status because the educational qualifications or quality of service of the "librarians" have been perceived to be less than professional.

If librarians are to succeed in sustaining government recognition therefore, they must improve on their present capacity at using their professional association in promoting the interests of their profession and society. They must also ensure that the quality of library personnel and library service do not erode public and government recognition of their professional status.

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Theme:

The Status, reputation and image of the library and information profession

Improving the market value of the profession:

increasing recognition

by

Elizabeth C. Reade Fong

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Improving the market value of the profession:

Increasing recognition

by

Elizabeth C. Reade Fong

INTRODUCTION

A profession is recognized by the specialised services it offers through the acquisition of specialised knowledge by its members who use this to respond to the needs, demands and expectations of it clients who constitute the "market".

Any entity offering a service is required to vigorously sell its "product" through well thought out marketing strategies if the product is to attract buyers on the open market. The "market" is made up of a conglomeration of individuals, organisations and institutions who have been identified as potential buyers of a product.

The Library profession in its beginnings operated within a custodial framework. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was strong advocacy from within the profession to change this function and to become service oriented as societies become more economically and technologically based.

Technological and economic development have gone hand in hand and I would volunteer that a significant part of our problem today is that the profession of librarianship continues to be regarded as a non-income generating activity contributing very little to an economically and technologically based world. Furthermore the profession has failed to relate and associate itself with the world of consumerism and to understand ways of the consumer.

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Little or no acknowledgement is given to the fact that the services of the profession and the skills of its people can and do assist in income generating activities of a society. It is an acceptable premise today, that where a price tag is attached to a product, a value and status is rendered to that product and consequently its producers.

Value in todays society is equated with need. What has the profession of librarianship actively done to inculcate into society the need for our services to a point where society becomes dependant upon it?

In this paper I propose to offer for discussion thoughts on how we as library and information professionals can increase our market value through increased visibility.

1. Attitudes and personalities

The evolution of technological dependance by many societies and cultures has seen the philosophies, assumptions and values of many professions subjected to extreme transforming pressures.

The ability of a profession such as librarianship to cope with these transforming pressures requires a radical change in attitude of its membership. By this I refer to librarians reassessing their contribution to society in terms of economic and technological advancement. Changes in attitude must come from within before any outward signs of visibility are possible. We are all in no doubt whatsoever as to how we have been viewed over the years. None of these descriptions have been flattering.

It is the task of every library professional today to make every effort to change his/her attitude. This may be facilitated by various means. However, I will focus on two which I consider to be most important in contributing to the visibility of the profession:

(i) upgrading of personal skills in communication and public relations

(ii) encouraging the active recruitment of a particular type of personality into the profession.

The upgrading of personal skills in communication and public relations rests on the initiative of the individual. Personal initiative gives rise to the search for the means of fulifilling this.

The active recruitment of individuals with a particular type of personality is made with reference to that personality labelled "assertive". As defined by Dr. Bob Montgomery

> " assertion means expressing your thoughts, opinions, feelings openly and non-defensively, making requests and refusing unacceptable requests but doing that in ways that deliberately take account of the rights and feelings of others".1

He states that the final result is a build up in self esteem and confidence which are the traits needed by the profession to be able to convince society of our value and to compete on the open market.

The change in attitude required and the search and recruitment of individuals with assertive personalities and combining these with the use of intensive lobbying and effective public relations techniques will strengthen the basis of the professions image. Implied in the above is the need for continuing education in the acquisition and upgrading of old and new skills in order that the profession cope with change. This can only be effective if mandatory.

Very much a part of this responsibility for the profession with reference to personalities and attitudes is the ability of library schools to cope with changes identified by the profession. Are appropriate needs assessment surveys being carried out to indicate what changes are occurring on the market and which must be incorporated into the curricula of library education?

Professional public relations firms today operate on "megabucks". It is well known that the profession does not generate the kind of income which will permit the utilisation of such firms. However, well

planned public relations programmes utilising the technology of desk top publishing available and accessible by most information units today, along with a confidant professional with excellent communication skills are relatively cheap but effective pr tools at our disposal.

In effect the first visible signs of achievement and change for the profession must come from the individuals who constitute the profession. In order to have unity within these individuals must be guided by a document which binds them as a unifying force and this requires a written code of ethics.

2. Codes of ethics

Members need and must be guided by professional ethics in order to provide a united image based on an accepted group of standards. These standards set the tone of the profession and it is through these standards that a profession is given status and identity.

Because library clientelle are dependant on the professional for the provision of an information service the professional enjoys a certain amount of power over his client. The library/information professional must be fully conversant with his code of behaviour which guides him in the everyday discharge of his duties and more so in situations where he may envisage motives by his client which could lead to the "abuse" of the information provided.

3. Participation in national development planning

Recognition for the library/information professional armed with his communication and upgraded professional skills and his desire to participate and advertise his skills may be obtained through an active role in his local and national development planning processes. I can confidently say without dispute that all countries say that they recognize the importance of information. Any national delegate speaking on the issue never fails to say so. However, the differences are vast in the way countries use this tool as a

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While developed countries have designed elaborate, intricate, high technologically based network information systems, most developing countries are struggling to establish and maintain public, school, community, academic and national libraries which are bereft of qualified personnel and financial support.

The participation to which I refer is involvement in the highest echelons of a national and local governments, organisations or institutions. This move requires positive attempts to be an integral part of those sections of the government and statutory organisations involved in national development planning, an information intensive activity. Through active involvement the professional can convince the system of the value of his contribution and the need for his skills.

A large proportion of Third World countries eg. F cific, Caribbean, Africa including Asia operate on very heavy culturally based systems often operating hand in hand with a colonial system. This cultural base often allows for flexibility in approaching the higher echelons of national decision making and must be utilised to gain mileage for the profession. The members must recognize that only involvement at the top via national committees, sub - committees of houses of representatives etc. will recognition be achieved.

4. Dollar value for services offered

Production has always been equated with costs either in cash or kind. The move today for providers of information of which there are many interdependent units is to equate an economic value to their product.

Within the profession, two schools of thought have been in existence. The notion of "user pays" and the "free" provision of services has caused dissension amongst many. The indecisiveness of the entire profession and division on the issue has not augured well for its image and status. Society today operates on a "user pays" base and the philosophy is that if "one pays - one values". This is combined with the fact that areas such as education, health and information which are not income generating activities are

facing massive cuts in finance given national economic downturns and thus the move is to be able to perpetuate revenue. Perpetuating revenue gains recognition.

The profession has reached a point where it must make a stand to charge for services rendered and consider the following:

(i) should the profession operate on a "user pays" concept for all its services?

(ii) should a price tag be put on a percentage of its services with flexibility for an element of free services?

This argument of "user" pays already operates in most academic libraries whose research faculty operate on allocations of funding which include an allocation to cover library services. In the case of public, national and community libraries which are reliant on town council, government, community or aid donor funding this issue has to be dealt with great sensitivity and tact on the part of those deciding costs. This economic value must however be in line with economic policies of the country itself and affordable by its present clientelle. Any fee arrived at must be take into consideration all relevant factors. This is an exercise which must be done in a thorough manner to prevent a negative effect on the profession. It is most important that all sectors of the "community" be represented when decisions are arrived at and that all clients be well informed. Bearing this in mind we cannot discuss this in isolation of quality of service and product of what we offer.

Quality equated with value in economic terms is the only way ahead to gain status and recognition in a "cash" economy.

5. Quality of service and quality of product

Underlying all factors promoting the library and information science professional is quality of service which is assessed upon ones ability to deliver the goods in demand. Mason articulated in "What is an Information Professional" (1990) that the function of information personnel is:

> "to get the right information, from the right sources, to the right client, at the right time in the form most suitable for the use to which it is to be put at a cost that is justified by its use". 2.

Are library and information professionals achieving the above? Are we convincing our clients that we possess the type of knowledge that can assist them? Are we treating our clients as individuals with individual needs which we can anticipate and fulfil? To work, consistently bearing the above philosophy in mind will result in a service and product of quality.

Our services are our "window" to the world and it is essential that these be presented to our clients by individuals armed with the skills to provide them. The concern of the client is to able to locate information when he needs it. He is really not concerned with the technical means by which he locates the information. The emphasis of our focus must be "user oriented" in order to increase our visibility at the "window". This change of focus is likely to have snowball effect of increasing recognition and thus market value of the profession by those who determine our status in society.

Service oriented professions such as ours are labour intensive. Quite often within the profession reference is made to library schools as being more theoretically and conceptually rather than practically oriented, inferring that graduates do not possess the library skills required to operate in the "real" world of the library/ information professional immediately upon graduating. In order to offer quality of service and

product as a profession we should be :

(i) offering a period of "internship" in the profession where these theories are put into practice under the guidance of an experienced professional and

(ii) determining how library school curricula may be changed to accommodate the practical side of the profession.

To improve the market value of the profession a combination of the above is essential. Library schools must expose students to some practical aspects of librarianship during the period of training Following this, on the attainment of the professional qualification a period of "internship" should be a part of every institution hiring a "raw" graduate. Many graduates are left to struggle along on their own and many of them either sink or carry on in the profession not being able to contribute to their fullest capacity. After a period of internship the graduate will feel confidant and be able to portray qualities he can market to his client as evidence of his professionalism.

6. Professional terminology

I cannot recall a profession in which there is as much confusion in identification as in librarianship. When one speaks of a nurse, lay persons are very clear she/he is not a doctor; a technician is not an engineer. This is not so in the library/information profession as clients are unable to recognize the difference between a professional, paraprofessional or clerk!

Terminology today changes with trends. Librarians are named after the building in which they work. Libraries date back to the time of Alexandria and were a part of that civilisation. The profession has survived many civilisations but many things remain as they were then!! Library buildings are innate objects and to remain associated with such objects, exhibits a reluctance to accommodate change and has resulted in the profession suffering the same fate. There is a definite need for the profession to change

and adapt to the times and this is applicable to the terms with which it is identified. As a librarian discussing our functions I see it as no different from that of the information professional as defined by Mason (1990).

Acceptance of change and standardisation of terminology will facilitate recognition. International movements such as IFLA where the greatest spectrum of countries and professionals are represented should be the facilitators of uniformity in this. Focusing on the definition of the information professional by Mason again, it is my belief that we should catch the bandwagon at this point and be rid of the term librarian and identify as information professionals while at the same time pursuing means which will strengthen our performance and credibility as the providers of information to the nation, institution or organisation.

6. Institutional/Organisational involvement

Librarians function within organisational and institutional structures. A clear understanding of the philosophies of these organisations and the offering of services which support these philosophies will widen the focus of the profession and improve the image and status of the profession.

In the academic institution there has been many a controversial discussion between academic and professional status. It should be the aim of every group of professional librarians in an academic institution to constantly battle for equality of conditions of service, recognition etc. When one group has achieved this for librarians work within a range of organisational philosophies, it is then their responsibility to assist the next group.

Library professionals must involve themselves in all facets of the organisations decision making. Representations on university committees, city and town councils, school boards and statutory

organisations which may or may not be library related can greatly assist in changing the views of the layperson with regard to his image of the profession.

Initiatives for liaison between the library as an institution within an institution must evolve from within. The underlying concept of service is "selling" and this means "going out".

Conclusion

Dynamism is the essence for visibility of the profession. Participation and active involvement in decision making bodies affecting our functions and purpose, internationally, nationally, regionally, at institution and organisation level are the means through which we will become visible. Assisted through a change of attitude and mandatory continuing education of library/information personnel, active public relations programmes written codes of ethics and focus on the "user" will improve the market value of the profession. The achievement of this is the responsibility of each individual, his institution, his colleagues, his library/information association and those professional organisations which are viewed as allies.

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Theme:

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PERCEPTIONS OF THE STATUS OF THE PROFESSION

MARIA ELENA ZAPATA Z
Director of Public Library Networks
National Library and Library Services Institute

Caracas, Venezuela

For internal use only:
Meeting No: Presession Seminar
SI: yes/no
Estimated number of participants in the meeting:

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SUMMARY

The subject of the status of the profession is viewed from the perspective of Latin America's current situation.

The first chapter analyses the problem of developing the information sector in the region, taking into account present socioeconomic, political, cultural and ideological conditions.

The second chapter describes the professional's current profile, its shortcomings, image problems of both professionals and their associations and its relation to university education.

The third chapter deals with the need to establish a new profile for the information professional more in tune with the mission of library and information services, as perceived by a new definition of development.

The fourth chapter describes the National Library of Venezuela's experience in training and updating librarians and other professionals working in the sector.

Finally, the new professional profile is described as closely resembling the information manager's profile.

Starting from there, and depending on the orientation of each country's government, National Information Systems in Latin America have reached different levels of development from one country to another, and even within the same country, sometimes in relatively short periods of time.

Latin America's current situation is determined by many factors: changes in world economy which began in the eighties, the fall in prices of oil and other raw materials, which caused a crisis in some countries, the foreign debt pressure and the economic measures adopted by debtor countries as a prerequisite for negotiation, high inflation rates, high unemployment and under-employment rates, the high and rising cost of foreign currency as opposed to the weakness of local currencies, and neo-liberal policies which mark new directions for world economy, and a new relationship between developed countries and the so-called Third World.

This crisis, which does not appear to be transitory, has had far-reaching consequences for our countries in the area of information especially because intense technological progress during the last decade has made for even greater disparities and inequalities among countries.

At present, influenced by the unfavorable economic situation, the information sector presents a complex panorama in which great inconsistencies in basic library services (public and school libraries, etc.) coexist with a growing pressure to adopt advanced technologies, responding in great measure to developed countries' strategies for expanding their own markets.

Thus, in our countries, information has become a basic element in social processes and like any other resource, its development and use must be subject to planning.

The greater or lesser development of National Systems in Latin America is directly related to the economic, political, social, ideological and institutional changes experienced by the countries of the region; nevertheless; in general terms, Latin America's present situation is characterized by:

- Insufficient development of the national information sector in most countries and absence of formal and informal information policies.

- Lack of an adequate or effective legal framework for developing the sector

- Nonrecognition and little value given to library and information systems and services, as evidenced by their exclusion from national development plans

- Difficulties in obtaining adequate funding on a regular basis.

- Services are mostly oriented to document collection and safekeeping (Storehouses as opposed to clearing houses)

- Little or no networking at local, regional or national levels.

- Little capacity for renovating services, for innovation and for elaborating new information products.

- Insufficient or inadequate collections to meet the ever-growing demand of users, most of whom are students from all levels of the educational system .

- Editorial production in most countries is scarce, and in general, is not adjusted to the real needs of large sectors of the population This situation creates an excessive dependence on foreign publications, which are difficult to acquire because of their high costs and the import duties.

- Lack of qualified personnel for efficient and effective functioning of information services and systems , both at operational and managerial levels.

- Low salaries of technical and professional personnel as compared to other sectors.

- Lack of professional associations with the capacity to participate in formulating national development plans and strategies for library and information services.

During the last few decades, concern has grown about " the current situation of the Region's information professionals and their real and potential capacity for facing the challenges of socioeconomic and cultural development during the next decade" (Páez, 1988).

In several regional events during the past years, it has been pointed out that the lack of qualified personnel at technical and managerial levels is the most important problem in the development of information systems and services in Latin America. In a number of countries, as a consequence of this situation, there appears to be a shortage of leaders for mobilizing resources towards the sector.

CURRENT PROFILE OF LATIN AMERICAN PROFESSIONALS

In Latin America, as in other regions of the world where the use of technology is not as intense or massive as in developed countries, it is essential to solve the problem of improving qualification levels of personnel who could eventually transform the information sector and increase its impact on national and regional development.

As a consequence of the direct or indirect impact of technology, Latin America is also experiencing an " information cult " not so much related to generating knowledge as to the proliferation of data and the growing demand for information, to such a degree that the use of a computer is inevitable. From this viewpoint, libraries are identified with the printed page, with books, with "feminine" work, not with the aggressive world of computers and technology. It is also linked to social groups who do not have enough purchasing power to have access to the new technology. Thus, the traditional

library turns into a resource of little value, on the fringe of new information technologies.

This situation is directly related to information professionals' traditional attitude: the profession originates in libraries: that is why so much emphasis is given to the institution and to traditional functions. "The library is like a sanctuary where the Librarian "hides" and does not go out to promote services. This was possible in the past, but today, with the use of computers and telecommunications to facilitate routine work and extend its radius, information can no longer be contained in the library, nor is it praiseworthy to do so" (Molina y otros , 1987).

The traditional attitude of information professionals (librarians, archivists and documentalists) seems to reflect a classical conception of librarianship, whereby great value is attached to the activities of organization and technical processing and little interest is given to developing attitudes and capacities for managerial activities and for transforming information units into more dynamic centers.

As is to be expected, the information professional's attitude, together with the insufficient incorporation of technological innovations to library services, affect the users' opinion about the social value of library services and of information as such.

In general, the profession in Latin America seems to limited by:

1.- Deficient , outdated professional training

2.- Traditional attitude towards the profession

3.- Progressively lower academic levels in undergraduate Library Schools

4.- Little or no research on the theme

5.- Negative attitude with relation to automation and to the use of other technologies associated with the sector.

6.- Traditional professional profiles: conventional technical ability, little managerial ability, little ability for promoting services, promoting reading, training users or interdisciplinary work.

7.- Non-participation in social processes.

8.- Lack of group conscience; professional isolation.

9.- General lack of intermediate-level personnel to deal with routine activities; proletarianization of non-professional assistant personnel

Thus, it would appear that from a professional, managerial, technical and academic point of view, there is limited capacity for developing the information sector so that it can support national development plans.

These negative characteristics have influenced the situation of the professional associations, which are virtually non-existent and can offer little support for consolidating or modernizing the information sector.

As Horowitz points out (1991), the Region does not present a very encouraging panorama in this area, with the exception of the Caribbean countries, where national and regional associations have existed for a long time and have attained high levels of development, maturity and efficiency (as for example, ACURIL) and of countries like Cuba, Brazil and Mexico, where professional associations seem to have a consolidated position.

However, in the majority of our countries professional associations generally seem to have the following characteristics:

- Development of union-type activities rather than training and qualification activities for their members.

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- Nonparticipation in government efforts within the sector, or in professional training activities in universities.
- Lack of research, publication and training programs
- Lack of contact with other professionals incorporated to the sector
- Ineffectiveness in promoting their profession and in achieving a better standard of living.
- Little interest in promoting reading and information for development, or renovating services
- Predominantly traditional outlook on librarianship

These shortcomings, as well as the image of the professionals and the associations seem to be directly related to the education received at universities.

In fact, a review of the bibliography on this theme shows that this is a recurrent problem. Horowitz (1991), for example, refers to three closely related, crucial problems, which are: " the insufficiency or inefficiency of library education which has as a consequence that the library profession has little social recognition and finally, the limited influence exerted by Latin American associations in the development of libraries in their respective countries".

University programs for training these professionals seem to have the same problems throughout to the region: outdated, as to adoption and use of new technologies; insufficient emphasis on administration/ management of systems and services; little social and humanistic education; little or no orientation towards research, not only in the area of information sciences but also in interdisciplinary activities, and finally, a marked tendency towards traditional collection organization.

According to Páez (1987), "the problem includes, besides, the somewhat contradictory situation of a student demand for outdated, academically "low profile" university programs (obviously because they serve as a refuge to students who are not accepted in more demanding careers) and a comparatively low unemployment rate in this subsector, possibly because gradual growth of the service sector in Third World countries has stabilized the demand for employment, at a relatively low cost in terms of salary because the profession is perceived as inferior".

In the case of Venezuela, for example, there were 660 active graduates from the largest Library School in the country (at the Universidad Central de Venezuela) by the end of 1991, while there were more than 1400 library and information services, including public, university and specialized libraries. This indicates that the labor supply is low in relation to the number of services that could employ these information professionals.

Library and information professionals must be prepared to confront two kinds of basic problems: those having to do with the adoption (implementation or adaptation) of information technology and those related to the social mission assigned to library services

THE LIBRARIES' MISSION AND THE NEW PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Considering its complex and very particular situation, Latin America must find its own definition for the concept of development.

Páez (1992) associates the new perception about development to the idea of social intelligence, defined as a society's capacity to solve problems by generating or applying knowledge. This way, the value of information is measured in terms of development. It is no longer a question of importing information from more developed countries, but of applying information to generate the knowledge which will in turn solve the problems of development.

We can infer from this concept that a poor community is one that cannot produce the goods and services it needs to create a satisfactory standard of living. Thus, poverty is directly related to the inability to acquire, process and apply information for problem-solving and for satisfying basic needs.

In contrast, a developed society is able to produce and apply information and knowledge to change its environment for its own benefit.

This perception of development comes with new set of values which have to do with development strategies . They are: solidarity, efficiency , participation and creativity.

Creativity, which is intimately related to human resource training, is fundamental for substituting costly foreign knowledge and technology needed to satisfy basic needs with generation of new knowledge and a more effective use of information. By valuing creativity, we recognize and value information and knowledge as a base for self-sustained development.

Library and information services have a role to play in socioeconomic development That is why there is an urgent need to improve the information professional 's qualification , his cap city for leadership and his ability for management. Only then will he be able meet new challenges and participate in the process of generating and distributing the information and knowledge required for attaining social wealth, a better quality of life and education for all.

According to the new perception of development, our countries need library and information services that will facilitate the process of transforming information and knowledge into social intelligence . They need not only more, but better services, to teach people (students, researchers, manufacturers) to use information and knowledge for problem-solving. Thus, there is a need for information professionals with special characteristics and/or attributes to respond to their countries' social, political economic and cultural conditions

As to the definition of a new type of information professional in Latin America, we have important antecedents. The following are the most relevant ones:

- In 1984, by request of the Venezuela's National Library and Ministry of Education, a technical mission financed by UNESCO and led by W.L. Saunders presented a technical report on "Graduate Education for Information Specialists" (Saunders, 1985).

This study recognizes the need for Latin America to create its own Regional Program for Graduate Studies in Information Sciences, according to present and future needs expressed by countries of the region. Saunders pointed out that "the most urgent need is to train specialists who can plan, design , organize and manage services, and occupy high level positions in the sector.... a new kind of specialist who can direct activities in information centers, libraries and networks with a thorough understanding of the objectives, functions, problems and potential, in his specific cultural context and in the framework of political, financial and developmental limitations and possibilities "

Taking these considerations into account the Graduate Program was oriented towards information management and technology it is directed to professionals who work in research, professors and high level operational personnel This Regional Graduate Program created at Caracas' Universidad Simón Bolivar (Venezuela) in 1986 has produced to date 85 specialists from different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean

- In 1987, INFOLAC's Technical Secretariat held a meeting in Guatemala to analyze, among others, elements for formulating a "Regional Project for Training Human Resources in Information".

As a requisite for formulating this project, a study on "Professional Profiles for Human Resource Development in the Information Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean" was carried out by Iraset Páez.

UNESCO Consultant (PGI and INFOLAC) and Coordinator of the above mentioned Regional Graduate Program in Information Sciences.

This study proposes a methodology for formulating a model for the development of the information profession in the Region.

Páez (1988) points out: " From an operational point of view, these professionals must confront such problems as: efficiency and effectiveness of services, optimizing availability and transfer of information resources and recovery and social projection of the professional role and status. From a historical point of view, these professionals must meet challenges which must be faced by the Region in the context of new strategies for socioeconomic and cultural development ".

Finally, also in 1987, a group of researchers in the Escuela Interamericana de Bibliotecología (Interamerican Library School)of Medellín, Colombia, undertook a project to establish a general profile for librarians and specific profiles of the occupations they could expect to find in the job market.

An important conclusion of this study (Molina y otros, 1987) is the need to improve librarians' education in four areas:

Technical: indexing, analysis and retrieval, with an emphasis on automation and telecommunications;

Administrative: administration of human, physical and financial resources, planning, project formulation and evaluation;

Research: interdisciplinary research in the field of information; and

Humanistic and Social Areas: as a way of providing librarians with critical and active training in cultural processes and social problems.

According to research results, a librarian should be able to:

- Be a critic, an observer and an actor with respect to cultural, and scientific processes and to social problems .
- Plan, organize, manage and evaluate information systems.
- Carry out research and apply the results to his work.
- Study and design new information products and services.
- Encourage the use of information as an instrument for development
- Participate in designing national information policies.
- Show creativity and work in cooperation with others.
- Keep informed about scientific and technical advances in the profession and apply new technologies to information systems.
- Value information for being the core subject of the profession, and keep informed about research, management, techniques for acquiring, organizing, retrieving and diffusing information, but also know about the social situation and develop an interest for information about different areas of human endeavor.

A VENEZUELAN EXPERIENCE

We think it is worthwhile to describe some aspects of the Venezuelan experience, where the National Library Institute has become a leader both in the development of the information sector and in educating and training its human resources.

The Institute is the largest employer of information professionals in the country, as by law, it is the government organ responsible for developing and operating the National System of Library and Information Services.

To carry out its mandate, the Institute has set up a complex organization which combines **central units,** such as the National Library Services, the National Conservation Center, the Library Information and documentation Center (CEDINBI), the National Directions of Public and Special Libraries and other supporting offices and **descentralized units**, such as the 22 Public Library Networks-one for each state- which operate in the interior of the country.

As it has to execute many different activities and responsibilities assigned to it, the Institute has made great efforts to recruit and train professional librarians and professionals from other disciplines to efficiently and effectively carry out functions for which in many cases, there are formal educational programs in Venezuela.

Our professional personnel must carry out technical and managerial tasks, work in multidisciplinary teams and establish permanent and effective relations with outside organizations. This is why the Institute's training activities over the past 15 years have included from traditional technical areas to the application of new technologies and management.

In technical areas, we have trained personnel in international cataloguing and bibliographic norms, in identification and normalization of subject headings, and in other areas needed to effect a national bibliographic control.

In order to develop an automated bibliographic information system,

compatible with international formats and with multiple access points, we sent professionals to Northwestern University and to the Library of Congress in the United States. These professionals have in turn trained many other professionals and technical personnel not only at the Institute, but also in other specialized and university libraries in the country, and in library and information services in other countries of the region (Chile, Colombia, Peru, among others).

In the area of conservation, the need for qualified personnel resulted in the creation of a Regional Training Center several years ago, where personnel from library and information units, archives, museums and other services receive specialized training to become Conservation Technicians. The Center's students come not only from Venezuela, but also from different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. At the same time, as the Conservation Center's regular activities as training activities require higher levels of specialization, qualified personnel already working at the center have receive advanced training in courses outside the country and by way of courses with international experts brought especially to Venezuela.

In the area of management, we would like to single out our experience with the National Public Library System. Created in 1979, this system is made up of 23 Networks or Regional Systems, one for each State. Each Network has an Coordinator, who is named by the Institute and who is responsible for the managing the services, human resources and budgets assigned to the Network. Although these professionals receive orientation and guidances from the Institute, they must render accounts to the State Government who is responsible for offering library services to the communities. This concept of system and Network exemplifies a unique approach to descentralizing the National Public Administration and represents a remarkable effort in coordinating programs and resources among the Institute, State Governments, Municipalities and other public and private institutions.

The current group of 23 coordinators is made up of 15 Librarians and 9 professionals from other disciplines: Education (2), Administration (2), Geography (1), International Studies (1), Sociology (1), and Literature (1).

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Ninety-one percent of the coordinators have worked at the Institute for more than 10 years, in the same position or in other technical and managerial posts.

This stable situation seems to be related in great measure to the institutional policy for training and improving its human resources. This is a way of dealing with the lack of correspondence between the professionals' academic profile when they graduate from university and the professional profile needed to coordinate a Library Network.

Virginia Betancourt (1988), points out that one of the main obstacles to the development of the sector has been the lack of qualified human resources, "... not only because of the small number of librarians in the country, but also because they have been trained as technicians who are responsible for a service and not as managers of library systems and networks or of technical processing centers". In the case of Public Library Network coordinators three strategies are being implemented simultaneously to solve this problem:

- Defining a body of policies, norms and technical library proceedings at national level, to guide and orient young librarians and library personnel with other professions.
- In-service training in planning, financial administration and personnel for librarians responsible for Networks, through courses, workshops and internships and by way of periodical encounters to evaluate Network management.
- Identifying professionals, librarians or other, with managerial capacity, to incorporate them to the group of Network Coordinators or to assign them to high level technical functions.

A very significant effort became a reality in 1991, when the Institute and Universidad Simón Bolívar agreed to establish a special regime so that 20 Public Library Network Coordinators could participate in the Regional Graduate Program in Information Sciences. This special regime is based on a combination of distance

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education and classroom activities, given that the participants all live in different cities. These professionals have accumulated valuable experience in administrating human, technical and financial resources, in formulating strategic plans for Networks, in interdisciplinary work and in coordinating efforts and resources with other public, private and non governmental institutions. Now, thanks to this new possibility, they have the opportunity to improve and perfect their training, thus reinforcing and validating their practical experience.

CONCLUSION

In Latin America, perception of the status of the information professional is definitely related to his education and further training, and consequently, to his real and potential capacity to meet the challenges of socioeconomic and cultural development in the region.

In this sense, professional education should be oriented in such a way as to take into account current tendencies in professional development and the real and potential need to strengthen the sector and make it more dynamic.

To elaborate a new profile for Information professionals implies much more than just adding new subjects to Library Schools' Programs. Educating high quality professionals is possible only "... when the student is a product of a stimulating intellectual environment; when he has had professors who stimulate his participation and who awaken his academic and professional interest; .., when he has been provided with the adequate space and resources for intellectual and practical work and when he has had the opportunity to confront his knowledge with the objective reality". (Arias O., 1991)

Another important aspect to consider is the training of information professionals as specialists, researchers and educators , since the tendency up to now has been to center educational activities on practicing professionals

By including these elements in his professional training we expect to shape a new type of information professional, who will meet user demand, efficiently

handle the implementation and evolution of information systems and services, and have the capacity to apply new information technologies. All of this, taking into account national situations, and in accordance with the roles and functions to be faced in a profession which must produce of goods and services required by society.

This means promoting the type of education that will allow information professionals to acquire criteria for interpreting the socioeconomic, cultural and ideological context in which information phenomena are produced, and at the same time, efficiently and effectively manage information resources. These professionals must possess certain characteristics or qualities that will orient their action not so much towards providing services as towards planning and managing information resources, what Baise Cronin (1985) has called "information managers".

Latin America's situation is complex and full of contrasts. Although we face many difficulties, we also have many strong points and opportunities

As far as human resources in the information sector are concerned, there are many many successful training experiences in the Region. As we approach the XXI Century, one of our most important challenges is to attaini regional and international integration and cooperation, to exchange experiences and to join efforts so as to give our professionals the education, training and updating they need to become leaders for the development the information sector in Latin America

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